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striven for by a few, and, when attained with labor and longing, most precious.

"Wisdom is justified of her children." We repeat, that the great artist may produce a great work of sacred art, whether his method be traditionalist, naturalist, or according to his own national associations, or according to those of the real scene itself; but that the first method, the traditional, is, of its proper nature, trammel to the artist; the second, if pushed to extremes, an offence, whether rightly or wrongly, to the "wisdom" of the age—if adopted in a modified form, a noble but minor degree of truth; the third, hardly to be grappled with, the highest and most noble truth when mastered.

CARLYLE.

THE two great Highland Thomases—Macaulay and Carlyle—are the last and best gifts of Scotland to England. Both possess those powers of imagination which flourish in the bracing mountain air of Scotland better than on the level plains of England. The English language, however, accustomed to thrive upon plain fare, seems almost too lean for the luxurious dishes of these Scottish epicureans. This is emphatically the case with the volcanic seer of Nithsdale. See him beginning his career, dashing down from his shaggy Highland heath, with curling lips and frowning brow, pouncing upon England with a fury and an impetuosity equal to that which animated the Guards who brought relief to Lucknow. See him, the stalwart son of a sturdy Scotch lass, hurling fire and flame in all directions, attacking single-handed the Gibraltar of social corruption; striving with Titan's power and Richter's thought to annihilate mediæval prejudice, to burn up the old rubbish, and to clear the way again for purer Christian thought. See him tearing to atoms terms, and things, and persons which have no meaning; and Moses-like, beating the rock of old words to yield new ideas. Gallant Scotch intellect! But, alas! poor Thomas, you must be patient with this slow-moving, wicked world! Go and ask some of your brave countrymen whether they did not find it easier to overcome the savage Sepoys than the prejudices of some of their civilized comrades. But he is like the unbelieving incredulous Thomas of olden times. He won't stop to listen. His blood is up, and off he dashes into the thick of the fight, with thoughts flashing like soldier's bayonets in mountain defiles. Oh, the wild, bold, daring man! Seated upon a proud, high-bred steed, he rushes along over fences and walls, almost like a drunkard, as if his German id ality had succumbed under the influence of Scotch whisky, but rushing along with method in his madness; indifferent to the beauties of Hellas, unimpressed with the grandeur of Rome, unmoved with the pathos of Calvary; trampling upon the silly crusaders and besotted minstrels; thundering along like a Calvinist camp-preacher in search of Catholic harlotry. At length a terrible crash shakes the earth. He hears a shriek of dismay. Blood

covers the globe as far as the eye can reach. Where once stood cottages blessed with happiness, scaffolds are now reeking with murder. Gentlemen are stripped of their fine clothes, scholars of their fine learning, priests of their holy robes. Weak men, brutalized by the selfishness of strong men, wreak their revenge by wholesale butcheries. The women of the Halle coquet with the guillotine, and when the terrible revel is over, a pale, but broad shouldered man is seen to haunt the battle-field, chuckling with fierce delight, like "a snuffy philosopher upon the watch." He takes the blood and the rest of the ingredients thrown into this caldron by the Fates, to his studio in Chelsea thus riding home laden with the horrors of the 18th century, and with far more boisterous glee than ever thrilled the weird sisters that sung over it their incantation song.

The 18th century is to Carlyle what the Whigs are to Macaulay. Both, imaginative as they are, proclaim their national proclivities by a shrewd selection of a strong basis. Macaulay's Adam is the first Whig, and Carlyle's Genesis begins with the French Revolution. Historians, in the highest sense, they are not, because the true historian, as Carlyle remarks in the opening pages of his *Frederick*, puts himself in harmony with the laws of the universe, and begins with the beginning. Neither of them belong to this class of harmonious historians, which, as Carlyle justly remarks, has not yet dawned upon the world. Neither Carlyle nor Macaulay begin with the beginning; but with that part which suits best their literary genius and their temperament. One selects the Whig revolution, in obedience to political predilections; the other chooses the guillotine dispensation as most convenient for giving vent to semi-grand, semi-grandiloquent thought. The one, apparently conservative, but in reality a demagogue, is kindled into eloquence and brilliancy by the heat of political warfare and the flow of dramatic incident. The other, reformatory in his aspirations, but unable to see beyond the gloom of a shadow, is attracted to the catacombs of revolutions, like the vulture to abandoned carcasses. Carlyle should have been a warrior; but the age is evidently not calculated to give to an energetic man like Carlyle a suitable place in the strong world of action. In the feeble world of letters he winces; we behold a vigorous man seeking a relief there, which action alone can supply. Carlyle's words may not even disturb the mice of Nithsdale; but from the moment they began to take effect, he would himself be the first to cry out against the result, and be utterly disgusted with the hideous freaks and pranks which the first process of the crystallization of his ideas into action would be likely to produce.

Rousseau was, in some measure, in his time to France what Carlyle is now to England, and probably Rousseau would have been rather startled if he had seen the logical flesh and blood connection between his ideas and the guillotine. Carlyle, planting his battery upon the platform of the guillotine where the Frenchman left it, is not much more keen-sighted than his predecessor, although his nose

is more "snuffing;" and if he were to re-visit this planet in 1989, he would probably have the same cause of surprise which would have made sentimental Rousseau stagger had he chosen to step forth from his grave in 1789. Carlyle, then, does not belong to the highest class of philosophers. He does not see the drift of his own ideas. He vomits out aspirations in language which, by its convulsions, betrays the want of harmony in the man's mind. Instead of clear, temperate, philosophical statement of thought, we have extravagant and bizarre metaphors. We are made certainly to feel that we are in the presence of a man who does not give us whole thought, only fragments of it. This mental background, and all background, haunts us like a nightmare. At times we are almost disposed to think that the stern man lacks daring, and says *Pumpernickel* when he means to say John Bull. We should like to see Carlyle grapple manfully with the evils in his own land, Milton-like, Cromwell-like, instead of looking on while he spoils his digestion by eating too much *Sauerkraut*, and losing himself in the fogs of the *Lünenburger Haide*. Yet at other times we cannot help sympathizing with his difficulties. The eighteenth century lops off the elasticity of the burly man's courage with far more terrible swiftness than ever was done by the guillotine. Poor, poor Thomas! How sad to see his spirit crushed by that naughty, bankrupt, guillotining century.

We say then, again, that Carlyle does not belong to the highest class of historians. He dislocates the logical progress of the doings of man, for the purpose of holding up the eighteenth century to the special gratification of the horror-loving boys, in the metaphysical galleries; and he holds it up with the same special-pleader's skill as that with which Macaulay supports one of his glittering antiquity arguments. The horrors of the eighteenth century have become the blessings of the nineteenth century, and the fearful crash which gave the *coup de grâce* to feudalism has paved the way for brighter days for the masses of men. But Mr. Carlyle sees only one side of the question—*the horrors*—and not the other side—*the blessings*. Among blind historians the one-eyed may be a king, but when the day of two-eyed historians comes, Carlyle will be dropped as a *borgne*. The misfortune about men like Carlyle is, that instead of talking with men and women of the present day, they converse only with books, or, in other words, with men and women of past times, who were merely rats and mice at the mercy of terriers. If, on his way to the battlefield of Leuthen, he had stopped in France and Germany, nay, even in his own England, he would have found that there has been so much progress since that fatal eighteenth century as to make even the common people see more meaning in writings, than he would himself care to be responsible for. But Carlyle struggles not with the world of the present day, but with the book-world of the past. The strange effects which that produces upon his grand and shaggy imagination is all he cares for. Although Carlyle has seen too little of the people of the present age to enable

him to rank high as a philosopher, and although there is too little thorough-going ideality in his nature to qualify him for the task of a harmonious historian, there is just that ambition about him to be both philosopher and historian which makes us enjoy the clambering of his powerful spirit up the Parnassus of thought. There is an irresistible charm in a wrestling imagination endeavoring to grapple with forces too subtle for its grasp. This contest is sublime. At times he comes before us with the thrilling and convincing earnestness of St. Paul, and the best thought of Christianity flashes from his pen. But at other times he is again the primitive unbelieving Thomas, screeching and hooting like a midnight owl, and talking like a Scotch peddler of bankrupt centuries; stalking about with the guillotine upon his back, and the eighteenth century in his throat; lading his pen with the biggest atrocities, and behaving like a metaphysical sans-culotte, bullying the lovers of freedom and progress out of their hopes, by strutting about *Chapeau-bas* in Potsdam, and bowing his great head before little Fritz—before *Fritzchen*.

Simultaneously with Carlyle's Frederick the Great appeared Berthold Auerbach's Frederick the Great, but the latter refers to Frederick Schiller. This latter Frederick is the true Frederick the Great of Germany, who will be remembered long after the warrior Fritz is forgotten. There was a time when Carlyle too was paying a poet's homage to the great German Frederick. Times are changed. We are now entertained by seeing the Scotch philosopher going on a metaphysical spree to Prussian barracks; but we feel confident he will soon get tired of the smell of Brandenburg gunpowder. His genius may undoubtedly make even barracks attractive, but barracks are barracks, and Thomas Carlyle is wanted in higher places.

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Critics are a forward-witted generation, and hasty to plant themselves between the writer and the reader, as a separate object of attention; whereas their only really valuable function is that of the keeper of a picture-gallery, who draws the curtain aside, and tells you from what point of view the artist meant that you should contemplate his work. Only thus will the natural congruities inherent in a great work be displayed, and the impertinences gagged of a would-be-wise beholder, eager to speak before he has learnt to look.—*J. S. Blackie.*

St. AUGUSTIN says, that men can more easily follow things themselves, than the precepts and discipline of those who would teach them in a scientific manner; that if any one were to give lessons in walking, he would have to specify many things which men would not so easily learn from him as they would practise them without his instruction; and that generally the spectacle of truth itself more delights and assists us than the process by which rhetoricians would teach it.—*Digby.*

It is only a great artist who knows when to be brief in descriptions, and when copious; where to light up his landscape with sunshine, and where to cover it with darkness and tempest.—*J. Beattie.*